

Chapter 6 **Community Character**

INTRODUCTION

The most important goal of the Comprehensive Plan is the first:

Protect and enhance Williamsburg's unique character - the historic area, college, entrance corridors, urban environment and open spaces.

The most important character defining features of the City are the Colonial Williamsburg Historic Area, the historic campus of the College of William & Mary, the City's historic neighborhoods and commercial areas, the major entrance corridors, and open space.

Protecting this character is by necessity a joint effort of the entire community. The City needs to work closely with its major institutions – the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and the College of William & Mary. Cooperation and coordination with James City County and York County is also important, since the character and visual quality of the major entrance corridors into the City transcend jurisdictional boundaries. Important open space needs to be preserved, maintained and made accessible through efforts such as enforcement of the standards of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act, public acquisition, delineation of greenbelt corridors, private dedication of easements, and passive recreational use.

This chapter deals with community character in four related, sections: historic preservation and design review, entrance corridors, greenbelts and open space. Each is important separately, but collectively they define our community.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND DESIGN REVIEW

Recognition of the importance of history and historic preservation has strong roots in Williamsburg. When the capital of the Virginia colony was moved to the present site of Williamsburg in 1699, then-Governor Nicholson prepared a detailed plan for the colonial city based upon Baroque city design principles, and including very specific standards – uniform setbacks for buildings, roof pitch, size of windows and specific prescriptions for street widths and the design of public buildings. Williamsburg began to decline after the capital was moved to Richmond in 1778, but was rescued through the generous support of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. The extensive restoration effort began in 1927 and continues today under the auspices of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

But Williamsburg has continued to grow and change since its beginning. A neighborhood of fashionable Victorian style houses, referred to as Peacock Hill, developed north of the City on the old Wheatland Farm following the coming of the C&O Railroad in 1881. The establishment of other nearby residential areas such as Chandler Court, College Terrace and West Williamsburg Heights followed during the 1920s and 1930s. Residential neighborhoods continued to develop around the center city as the Colonial Williamsburg restoration effort matured in the 1940s and 1950s. As the downtown area evolved into a tourist destination, shopping centers followed the suburban movement away from the center city in the 1950's. Developments of the past 20 years have seen the continued outward expansion of the City's residential areas; expansion, infill and redevelopment of the commercial corridors; and major investments in the Center City area with the development of the City Square area, the Prince George Parking Garage and the College Corner Building.

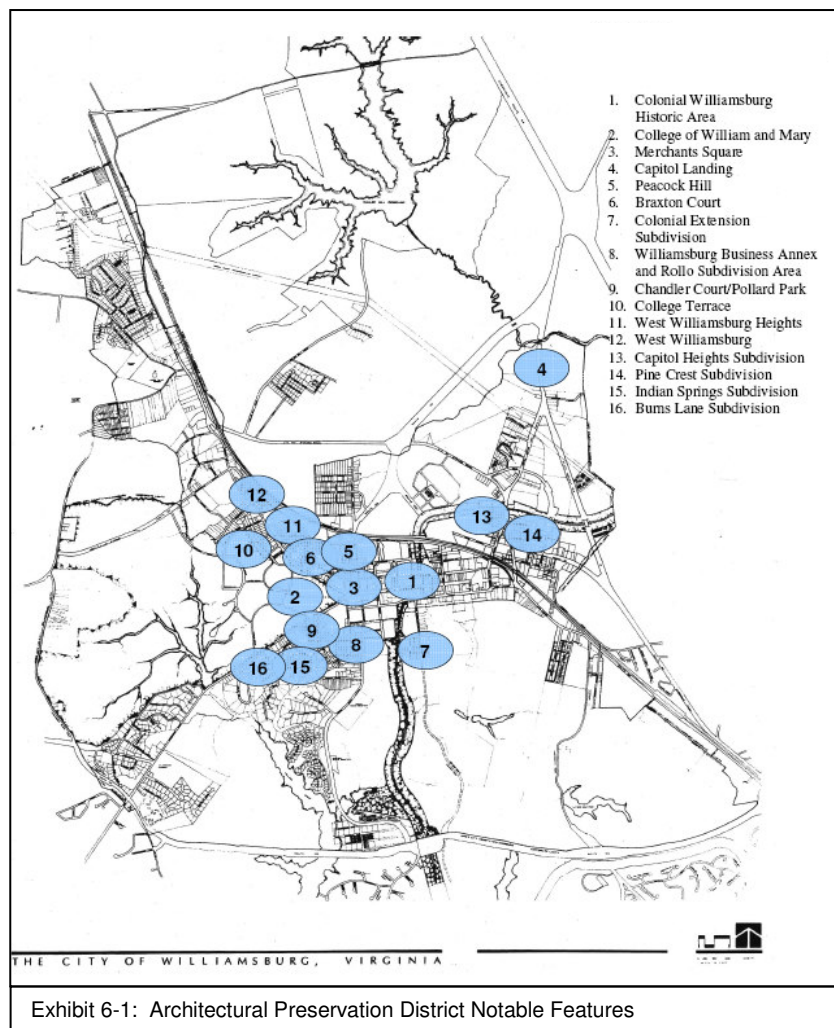
Williamsburg has been involved in design review since its founding. Governor Nicholson's standards for the colonial capital and the carefully researched standards used by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in its restoration efforts are noteworthy precedents. Since 1958, Williamsburg has had an architectural review board responsible for reviewing new construction in the City.

Acting on recommendations in the 1989 Comprehensive Plan, a more detailed program was implemented to strengthen both historic preservation and design review efforts in the City. The architectural review section of the Zoning Ordinance was revised in 1991 and established an Architectural Preservation District (AP) and six Corridor Protection Districts (CP). The Architectural Review Board's duties now include: review of all new construction and alterations to existing buildings in the AP and CP districts, review of signs in both districts; and review of demolition and relocation of buildings in the AP district. In the spring of 1994, the City's preservation program was recognized by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources when Williamsburg became the 13th Certified Local Government in Virginia.

Architectural Preservation District (AP)

While many associate Williamsburg's image and history only with the restored colonial capital, Merchants Square, the Colonial Parkway and the College of William & Mary, it is also blessed with numerous other buildings, neighborhoods and archaeological resources that have evolved over time and contribute to a sense of history as well as to the visual character of the community, and which enhance the setting of the Colonial Williamsburg Historic Area.

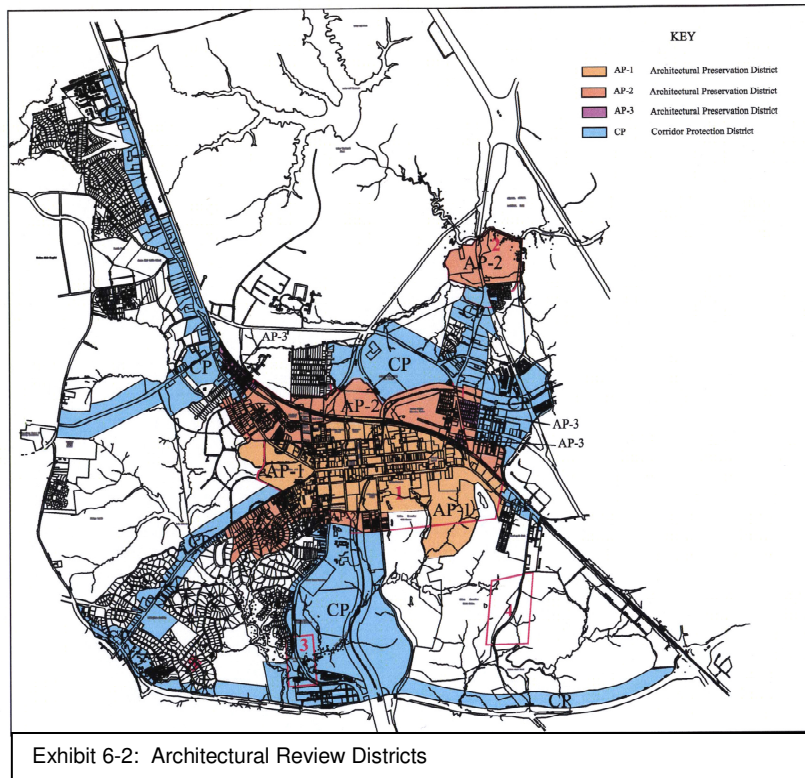
These include the neighborhoods of Braxton Court, Chandler Court and Pollard Park (both on the National Register of Historic Places), Peacock Hill, College Terrace, West Williamsburg Heights, the downtown Richmond Road and Jamestown Road areas, the 18th century roads connecting with Capitol Landing and College Landing (both on the Virginia Landmarks Register), and the Cedar Grove and Eastern State cemeteries. These areas should be protected from adverse influences and new uses, structures and signs should be in keeping with the character of the district. These significant areas are located on *Exhibit 6-1: Architectural Preservation District – Notable Features*. More details on the history and architectural character of each of these areas are contained in an appendix to the Design Review Guidelines adopted by the Architectural Review Board.



Corridor Protection District (CP)

The major entrance corridors which provide significant routes of tourist access to the Colonial Williamsburg Historic Area are included in the design review process as Corridor Protection Districts. These routes are identified on the *Exhibit 6-2: Architectural Review Districts*, and include the following streets: Jamestown Road, Monticello Avenue, Routes 132, Visitor Center Drive, Bypass Road, Route 143, Second Street, York Street, North and South Henry Streets, and Route 199.

Because these entrance corridors do not always neatly conform to jurisdictional boundaries, it is recommended that Williamsburg work with James City and York Counties and take part in a joint tourist access corridor program to insure that efforts are comprehensive and coordinated with design review standards.



Architectural Inventory

As recommended in the 1989 Comprehensive Plan, a survey and assessment of architectural resources in the Architectural Preservation District was completed in 1992. With the assistance of a matching grant from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, a reconnaissance level architectural survey was conducted for all buildings over 50 years old in the AP district. The report from the survey identified 12 buildings and five districts for potential nomination to the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register. From the assessment of the City's resources in the 1992 survey report, a listing of locally significant architecture and areas was created to assist the Architectural Review Board with their deliberations.

Since the inventory is almost 15 years old, it is recommended that the City update the survey. This update will allow the City to better evaluate the continued proposals for new development and redevelopment in the Architectural Preservation District.

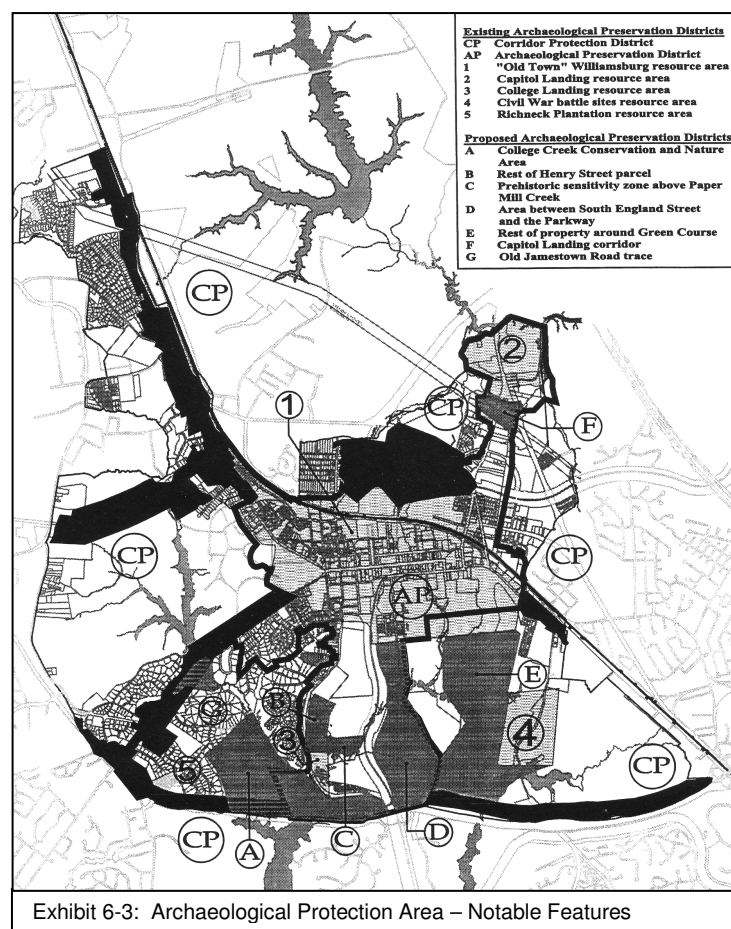
Architectural Review Guidelines

As recommended in the 1989 Comprehensive Plan, the Architectural Review Board first adopted Design Review Guidelines in 1993 to assist it in reaching fair and objective decisions when reviewing proposals in the AP and CP districts. A one-year review of the Guidelines was conducted by the Architectural Review Board, Planning Commission and City Council, resulting in the adoption of revised Guidelines in March 2006. This extensive review process ensured that the Guidelines reflect the City's goals for development and redevelopment as well as those for architectural preservation and design review. These Guidelines represent the best tool that the City has to encourage the preservation and improvement of its architectural character.

The guidelines are based in part on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, and distinguish between the different character of the AP and CP districts, and also between different parts of the AP District. The most restrictive guidelines are adjacent to the Colonial Williamsburg Historic Area, the old campus of William & Mary, and the National Register Historic Districts of Pollard Park and Chandler Court. The Colonial Williamsburg Historic Area is the most important part of the AP district and to ensure that the integrity of this nationally significant resource is maintained for future generations, building projects are required to be based on documented historical and/or archaeological evidence. Development in the AP district is encouraged to be compatible with existing buildings and neighborhoods. In the CP district, development is encouraged which respects the overall character of the City and enhances the City's entrance corridors.

Archaeological Preservation

While the thrust of preservation activities in Williamsburg has centered on 17th, 18th and 19th-century American history, other important remnants of Williamsburg's past still exist and can contribute toward an understanding and appreciation of the cultural landscape. Some of these prehistoric and historic resources include sites and structures occupied or used since the 17th century, as well as important 20th century sites. In order to determine the level of significance of these resources, the areas should be studied prior to any proposed development or redevelopment, and should be protected from adverse influences whenever possible.



The City's known significant archaeological resources were identified in a Resource Protection Planning Process (RP3) study conducted by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation for James City County, York County and the City in 1985 (revised in 1990). The 1989 Comprehensive Plan recommended that these areas be studied for significant resources to provide a reasonable assurance that any future development or redevelopment in the City does not have an adverse impact on unidentified resources. As a means of identifying all documented historic archaeological resources and predicting prehistoric archaeological resource areas in the City, an Archaeological Map Assessment Study was developed for the City by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

As recommended in the 1989 Comprehensive Plan, an Archaeological Review section was added to the Zoning Ordinance in 1995. Five Archaeological Protection Districts were designated (Old Town Williamsburg, Capitol Landing, College Landing, Civil War battle sites, and Richneck Plantation. To better

protect identified resources, additional districts should be added as identified in *Exhibit 6-3: Archaeological Protection Area – Notable Features*.

The mechanism triggering archaeological review is the preparation of site plans and subdivisions within these districts - archaeological surveys and evaluation reports must be undertaken as part of the development review process, with the Planning Commission acting as the archaeological review board. If significant archaeological resources will be adversely affected by the development project, the Planning Commission may require the modification of the site plan or subdivision plan to avoid the resources.

Williamsburg's Role in the Civil War

At the outbreak of the American Civil War, Williamsburg was little more than a small southern college town with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants. The College of William & Mary and the Eastern Lunatic Asylum were the town's major institutions. In 1862 the Virginia peninsula between the James and York rivers became the corridor for the Union Army of the Potomac to advance on Richmond. Just east of town stretched the Williamsburg defensive line. The line consisted of 14 forts, commonly called "redoubts", which comprised the third Confederate line encountered by Federal troops during their advance toward Richmond. The Battle of Williamsburg was fought in wet and raw conditions on May 5, 1862. Nearly 20,000 troops fought within earshot of the town's inhabitants. Following the battle, the Confederate army continued its withdrawal toward Richmond, and Williamsburg fell under Federal martial law for the remainder of the war.

The development of plans for "Quarterpath at Williamsburg" by Riverside Healthcare System has resulted in the proffer of a 21 acre Redoubt Park bordering Quarterpath Road between Redoubts #1 and #2 north of Tutter's Neck Pond. These redoubts, which supported the defense of Fort Magruder, should be preserved and interpreted as a part of Redoubt Park. The setting of these redoubts beside historic Quarterpath Road should also be preserved as much as possible, and care must be taken in the design of the improvement of Quarterpath Road to a minor arterial street to minimize encroachment into the historic character of Redoubt Park.

ENTRANCE CORRIDORS

The City's entrance corridors present the initial character and image of Williamsburg to those traveling into the City. The City should work to improve both the functional and visual character of these nine entrance corridors, as shown on *Exhibit 6-4: Williamsburg Entrance Corridors*, are:

Richmond Road from the City limits to College Corner
Monticello Avenue from Ironbound Road to Richmond Road
Jamestown Road from Route 199 to College Corner
North Henry Street/Route 132 from Bypass Road to Lafayette Street
South Henry Street from Route 199 to Francis Street
Capitol Landing Road from Queen's Creek to the Colonial Parkway
Second Street from the City limits to Page Street
York Street from the City limits to Page Street
Page Street from the Colonial Parkway to York Street

In 1994, the City commissioned LDR International, Inc. to prepare an *Entrance Corridor Beautification Study* to develop strategies, concepts and standards to promote the improvement and beautification of these corridors. Based on these standards, the following goals are established for the City's entrance corridors.

- Strengthen the concept of "gateway" and create a strong sense of arrival, offering a clear message that one is entering Williamsburg.
- Improve the functional and visual character of the corridors, while maintaining a balance between convenient vehicular access and a quality pedestrian environment.
- Achieve consistency in streetscape through simplicity of design, repetition of common landscape and streetscape elements, and placing of utilities underground.

- Implement street improvements which are of the appropriate scale and capacity to serve long-range traffic demands, while respecting the environment and scale of the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Support economic development by using publicly supported streetscape and landscape improvements to leverage and stimulate private investment.
- Promote intergovernmental cooperation to protect and improve the City's major entrance corridors, recognizing that the visual quality of these entrances transcend jurisdictional boundaries.
- Reinforce the standards contained in the Architectural Review Board's Design Review Guidelines.
- Develop design standards for landscaping, sidewalks, lighting and other streetscape elements, and incorporate these standards into the City's zoning regulations.

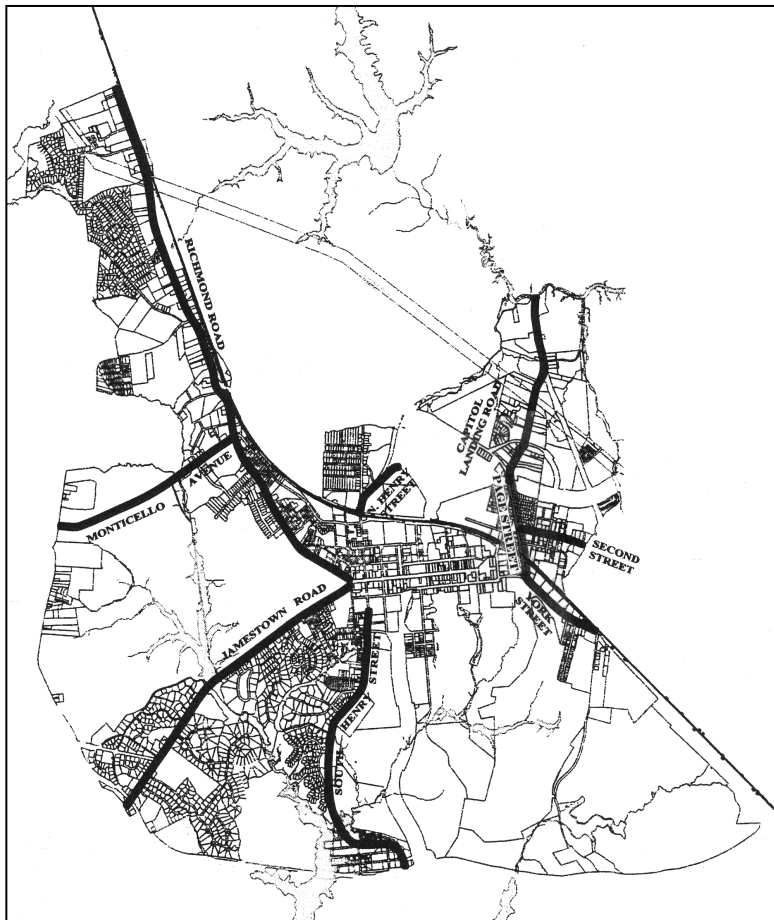


Exhibit 6-4: Williamsburg Entrance Corridors

Corridor Specifics

Richmond Road

Richmond Road is the City's predominant commercial corridor, serving as a transition from James City County to the heart of the City at College Corner, where Richmond Road meets Jamestown Road at the College of William & Mary. Great strides have been made over the past 20 years to enhance this corridor, and the greatest accomplishment has been the undergrounding of overhead utility lines from College Corner to the Virginia Power Easement near the City limits. Only one-half mile of the three-mile corridor remains to be placed underground. Other recommendations that have been implemented include new street name and traffic signage, new City entrance signs, the requirement of monument signs for commercial uses, and the planting of a substantial number of trees in the median of the dual-lane section of Richmond Road west of the Virginia Power easement.

Areas of improvement that continue to be needed are to minimize and

consolidate the number of curb cuts for commercial properties, to introduce additional street trees where possible, and to continue to encourage the elimination or reduction of parking in front of commercial buildings (as has been done with Red, Hot and Blue, Applebee's, Chili's, and the General Store). Additional improvements to sidewalks are needed, particularly in the close in section of Richmond Road between Brooks Street and College Corner.

Monticello Avenue

Monticello Avenue is a scenic entrance corridor into the City from the west, connecting directly to Route 199 and Route 5 in James City County. The importance of this corridor has increased because of the completion of Route 199, the construction of the Williamsburg-James City County Courthouse, the New Town Development in James City County, and this will serve in the future as the primary entrance to the College of William & Mary. Adequate greenbelts of at least 75 feet should be maintained along both sides of the road.

The Ironbound Road/Monticello Avenue intersection should be improved, with new signage and landscaping identifying this entrance as an important gateway into the City. Except for the improvements, the wooded section of Monticello Avenue should remain a two-lane, undivided road for the balance of the distance to Compton Drive. In the future, this section should be improved as a “more refined parkway” without curb and gutter but with paved pedestrian connections to the College, the Williamsburg and Monticello shopping center area, High Street, the Williamsburg-James City County Courthouse, and New Town in James City County. The commercial section of Monticello Avenue, from Treyburn Drive to Richmond Road, will be greatly improved when the present underground wiring project is completed. This should be coupled with improved landscaping along this section of the corridor, as is being done by the City in cooperation with the owner of the Monticello Shopping Center. The incorporation of the Williamsburg Community Hospital site into the campus of the College of William & Mary will anchor the middle section of this corridor.

Jamestown Road

Jamestown Road connects the Center City to Route 199 and Jamestown and serves as an important entrance way from the southwest. Jamestown Road should continue to retain its residential character along its southwest portion, with commercial uses limited to the area around the Route 199 intersection. Lake Matoaka provides a clear transition between the southwest portion of the corridor and its terminus at College Corner, with the campus of the College of William and Mary located along the north side bordered by residential and residential scale buildings along the south side of the road.

The “campus” character should be retained along the north side, but new development on the William & Mary campus should be compatible with the residential image of the south side. The lack of a sidewalk on the north side of the street in front of the College’s Phi Beta Kappa Hall interrupts the pedestrian flow along the corridor in the College area, and this gap should be filled in by the College. Additional sidewalk improvements on the College side should be incorporated into new developments along the corridor, such as the proposed Business School at the corner of Campus Drive and Jamestown Road. The maintenance of the College properties on the south side of Jamestown Road from Cary Street to the old College Bookstore should be improved, since their deteriorated physical condition detracts from the well-maintained character of the rest of the corridor.

North Henry Street/Route 132

The North Henry Street/Route 132 corridor is a major access route from the north, connecting Interstate 64 with the Colonial Williamsburg Visitor Center and the Center City. The portion of the route within the City (south of Bypass Road) retains its natural character because it follows the topography of the drainage swale, has little visible roadside development and has a heavily wooded edge.

The character of this corridor should be maintained into the future by avoiding unnecessary pavement widening or excessive curb cuts. The City should continue to maintain the high quality landscaping at the northeast corner of North Henry Street and Lafayette Street, and the vacant lot on the southwest corner should be improved with landscaping and/or buildings as the City Square area is redeveloped.

South Henry Street

South Henry Street is the major access route from the south connecting Route 199 with the Center City. More importantly, the road section north of College Landing Park follows the historic route connecting Colonial Williamsburg with its southern port at College Landing on College Creek. The route retains much of its “country road” character with a natural landscaped edge and varied topography.

The gateway character of the South Henry Street/Route 199 intersection should be emphasized by protecting and enhancing the signage and landscaping in this area. The adjoining lower section of South Henry Street should continue to retain its rural character and the integrity of the historic route should be protected, and it should be continue to be designated as a greenbelt corridor. Views to College Creek, College Landing Park and the proposed Papermill Creek Park at the crossing of College Creek and South Henry Street should be emphasized through careful management of the roadside landscape. The mixed use character of the corridor from Mimosa Drive to Francis Street should be retained and enhanced, and redevelopment on the west side of the street between Mimosa Drive and Ireland Street should respect both the residential character to the south and the “campus” character of the National Center for State Courts and the College of William & Mary Law School.

Capitol Landing Road

Capitol Landing Road serves as an important entrance into the City from the north, and follows the approximate location of the original eighteenth century road from Capitol Landing on Queen’s Creek into the Center City. The present entrance corridor extends from the Route 143/Interstate 64 interchange in York County and continues across Queen’s Creek (the corporate limits) for approximately one mile until it meets the Colonial Parkway and Page Street. The northern section from Queen’s Creek to the Merrimac Trail intersection is predominantly undeveloped and wooded in character, while the remainder of the route to the Colonial Parkway is primarily commercial in character, with numerous opportunities for further development and redevelopment.

The section of the corridor from Queen’s Creek to the Merrimac Trail intersection is an important “gateway” into the City, and its importance will be increased as the land adjoining the corridor is developed. The majority of the road in this section is lined with mature trees and vegetation, and the greenbelt designation should be retained. The proposed future Capitol Landing Park at Queen’s Creek will further enhance the character of this corridor, which is recognized as one of the City’s character defining areas in the Historic Areas Plan. As the commercial portion of this corridor is developed and redeveloped, redundant entrances to individual parcels should be eliminated or consolidated. Sidewalk needs to be extended on the east side of Capitol Landing Road from Parkway Drive to Merrimac Trail to connect existing commercial and residential areas, and this sidewalk needs to be extended toward Queen’s Creek when the residential areas west of the Merrimac Trail intersection are developed.

Second Street

The Second Street corridor is dominated by auto-oriented commercial. The corridor was included in the *Richmond Road and Second Street Streetscape Study*, an in-depth analysis of the two commercial corridors that included specific recommendations for visual improvement of the area. Suggestions included placing overhead utility lines underground, planting continuous street trees, improving the street lighting, screening of parking, new landscaping and signage. A specific streetscape plan for Second Street was developed and implemented in 1990-91.

There are several major parcels suitable for redevelopment east of Parkway Drive, which will present an opportunity to consolidate entrances and increase landscaping along the corridor. The placing of utilities underground should remain a future goal for this important corridor.

York Street

York Street enters the City from the east, and is the City portion of Route 60 from Route 199 to Page Street. This corridor parallels the CSX Railroad tracks and supports several business and four major

hotels. A large portion of the southern frontage is owned and used by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and is part of the Historic Area. The corridor terminates at the “Tri-Corner” intersection on York Street where Lafayette Street, Page Street and York Street intersect. In 1997, the City relocated the granite curb and widened the asphalt paving between Page and Lafayette Streets to accommodate truck turning movements. In addition, new brick sidewalks and painted crosswalks were installed.

The importance of the York Street corridor will be increased by the future development of Quarterpath at Williamsburg at the southeast corner of the City, owned by Riverside Healthcare System, Inc. The existing sidewalks and bike lanes in this corridor will enhance the pedestrian and bicycle connection with the 900+ dwelling units proposed for this area.

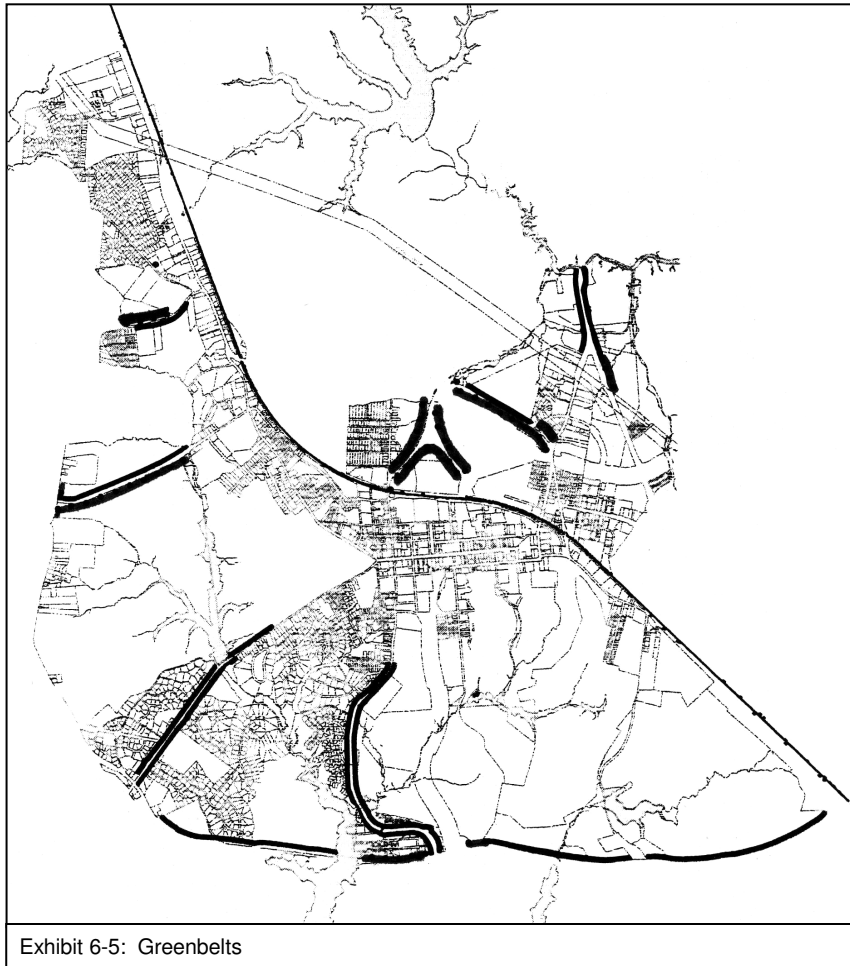
Page Street

Page Street is not really an entrance corridor, but it provides an important connection between three other entrance corridors: Capitol Landing Road, Second Street and York Street. The section between the Colonial Parkway and Second Street is largely residential in character, and the east side of the street from Second Street to the CSX Railroad is commercial in character. There is a major redevelopment opportunity at the southeast corner of Page Street and Penniman Road, and the design for this area should be carefully reviewed because it is just across the railroad tracks from the eastern end of the Colonial Williamsburg Historic Area. The character of Page Street is defined more by the buildings than the landscaping, and the Architectural Review Board should carefully evaluate plans for new and renovated building in this corridor.

GREENBELTS

A successful recommendation of the 1989 and 1998 Comprehensive Plans has been for the establishment of greenbelts. Greenbelts are generally intended to be left undisturbed by future development where designated by the Comprehensive Plan, and the Zoning Ordinance requires a 50 foot greenbelt along designated streets, with 75 feet being required along Route 199. Approximately 13 miles of greenbelts are identified in the City, and this standard has been applied successfully to Holly Hills, Holly Hills Carriage Homes, Richmond Hill, The Oaks, Brandywyne, Spring Arbor Assisted Living Facility and Bristol Commons, and will be applied to the new developments of High Street and Quarterpath at Williamsburg. The recommended greenbelts are identified on *Exhibit 6-5: Greenbelts*, and comprise the following streets:

- **Ironbound Road** -- north side of the street from Ernestine Avenue to the James Blair Middle School; south side of the street from the Wales subdivision to the old fire station; and east side of the street between Berkeley Middle School north to the existing houses fronting Ironbound Road
- **Monticello Avenue** -- north and south sides of the street from Ironbound Road to Treyburn Drive
- **Jamestown Road** -- north side of the road between the Citizen and Farmers Bank and Campus Drive-- south side of the road from Route 199 to Lake Matoaka
- **Bypass Road** -- north and south sides of the street from Route 132 to the Capitol Landing Road intersection
- **Capitol Landing Road** -- both sides of the street from Queens Creek to just beyond the Merrimac Trail intersection
- **Route 199** -- north side of the street from the City Water Tower to the Route 60 East/Route 199 interchange
- **North Henry Street** --both sides of the street from Bypass Road to the CSX railroad
- **South Henry Street** --both sides of the street from Route 199 to Mimosa Drive
- **Merrimac Trail** -- east side of the road from just south of Capitol Landing Road to the Virginia Power Easement
- **Strawberry Plains Road** -- east side of the road from John Tyler Highway to the Strawberry Plains Planning Area boundary (except for the Mt. Pleasant Professional Center)
- **Longhill Road** -- east side of the street across from Kiwanis Park



Greenbelts should be left in an undisturbed natural state, unless modifications are approved by the City. When retail and other commercial uses are adjacent to designated greenbelts, modifications to the character and width of the greenbelt may be allowed to provide the visibility that is needed for these uses. However, any modifications should preserve the landscaped and tree-lined character of the streets.

Greenbelts will continue to play a prominent role in preserving community character, since they are located along important entrance corridors and connecting thoroughfares, as well as adjacent to major economic development areas. By protecting greenbelts, the City will ensure that the aesthetic form and function of these important corridors are preserved. At the same time,

Williamsburg must allow adequate visibility for retail and other commercial uses in order to support the local economy.

OPEN SPACE

An important element of the City's character is its system of greenbelts and open spaces. These open space areas are generally depicted on the Future Land Use Map as "Sensitive Environmental Areas and Resource Protection Areas," "Parks, Parkway and Recreation," and "Greenbelts."

Regulation

A primary means of control of this open space is through the implementation of the City's Chesapeake Bay Preservation Districts. The RPA (Resource Protection Area) requires a 100 foot buffer from the edge of a wetland or shoreline, and this can result in major areas of open space around and through new developments such as Holly Hills, Savannah Green, Strawberry Plains and Brandywyne). Approximately 18 percent of the City's land area is designated as Resource Protection Areas, and another 42 percent is designated as RMA (Resource Management Areas) - this comprises land within 500 feet of an RPA.

Another means of regulatory control is the requirement of maintaining a certain percentage of a site as landscaped open space. This is required in the City's multifamily residential and most of the non-residential zoning districts, and ranges from 15 to 50 percent. In addition, cluster subdivisions require that at least 25 percent of the gross land area of the subdivision be maintained as open space. These requirements can be further enhanced in those areas where greenbelts are mandated, as discussed later in this chapter

Acquisition

The City should continue to actively investigate and pursue opportunities to acquire open space. There are several examples of the positive impacts of this program:

- The 1987 purchase of the Minor's Store property at Capitol Landing Road and Page Street, jointly funded by the City and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. The store was demolished, and the property was landscaped to become Minor's Park.
- The 1988 purchase of the College Woods property, beside and behind Berkeley Middle School on Strawberry Plains Road. This property was formerly approved for a 130 lot single family subdivision. The rear 37 acres was exchanged with William & Mary for property on South Henry Street. The remaining 13 acres is designated for development as Mixed Use land use.
- The 1996 purchase of the remaining 160 acres of the proposed Holly Hills subdivision. This allowed for the establishment of the Richneck Conservation Area (105 acres), which will be preserved for open space and utilized as part of the City's Chesapeake Bay preservation program, through its designation as Regional Reserved Open Space. This acquisition allowed the preservation of the viewshed from College Landing Park and from Route 199.
- The 1996 land exchange agreement with the College of William and Mary. The City received 37 acres on the east side of South Henry Street north of Papermill Creek, and the College will receive 37 acres behind Berkeley Middle School as described above. This exchange allowed the College to further preserve the Lake Matoaka watershed, and will allow the City to develop a passive park on the north shore of Papermill Creek. Restrictive covenants were placed on both properties to preserve their use as passive open space.

The City should continue the acquisition program with the highest priority placed on obtaining the Capitol Landing Park site and the College Creek nature area. The Capitol Landing site will allow the City to preserve the historic site of one of Williamsburg's Colonial ports, and this land should become a passive park similar to College Landing Park. The College Creek Nature Area, comprising approximately 40 acres, bounded by South Henry Street, Route 199 and College Creek, should be preserved as undeveloped open space to help South Henry Street retain its character as a scenic entrance corridor, but a small area adjacent to College Landing Park could be linked to the park through an extension of the existing marsh walk. The College Creek Nature Area and the contiguous lands of College Landing Park, Richneck Conservation Area, Papermill Creek Park (proposed) and Great Neck Picnic Area (closed) comprise 200 acres of passive open space, forming a major open space area in the southern section of Williamsburg.

A small, but important, parcel should be preserved as open space in the Municipal Center area. This one acre area between the First Baptist Church and the Crispus Attucks PUD was proposed as open space with the development of the Armistead Avenue PUD in 1974, but was not shown as open space in the 1989 and 1998 Comprehensive Plans. It should be designated as Parks, Parkway, Recreation land use on the Future Land Use Map, and remain as a passive open space.

Institutional Preservation

While the City's parks and parkways are essential elements of the open space system and are "protected" because of their public ownership, the preservation of land by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and the College of William & Mary greatly contribute to the quality of Williamsburg's environment. The Colonial Williamsburg Historic Area is the preeminent open space in the City, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and expanded by 128 acres in 2002. The College of William & Mary designates substantial portions of its land for preservation, including the 245 acres of the College Woods will be maintained in its natural state. This large area is complements the landscaped grounds of the Main Campus. The College and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation together provide the City with a quantity and quality of open space that is unmatched by any other City in the Commonwealth, if not the country.